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Sculpture new and old from the Antonine Basilica at Utica

Ben Russell

Abstract

Over the last two hundred years various pieces of sculpture have been found in what is left of the ruins of the centre of the Roman city of Utica (modern Tunisia). This material is now mostly spread between museum collections in Tunis, Copenhagen, Leiden and London, though some of it remains at Utica, and at least one piece is lost. To judge from what little documentation survives, many of these sculptural elements were found in the same area of Utica and indeed can with reasonable confidence be associated with a single structure, an Antonine-era civil basilica, first identified in the 19th century and recently excavated by a team from the Institut National du Patrimoine and the University of Oxford. This paper presents the new sculptural material unearthed by these excavations for the first time and compares them to the sporadic finds made from the early 19th century onwards. In reconstituting this sculptural assemblage new insights into the decorative programme of the Utican basilica and the aspirations of its commissioners and their community can be gained.

Little is now visible of a major monument that once dominated the centre of Roman Utica (modern Tunisia) (Fig. 1).¹ This rectangular building, 55 x 44 m, has been so systematically spoliated that all of its superstructure and much of its foundations are now lost. The alignment of the robber trenches that targeted these walls, clear both on the ground as well as on aerial photographs, however, indicate that this was the civil basilica of Roman Utica. In plan it comprised a central room surrounded by a colonnade on four sides, solid walls beyond these, with external porticoes running along the north and south sides; the span of the central nave was 16.5 m (Fig. 2). At least 84 columns, a combination of Troad and Aswan granite, were used in the ground floor, while the upper storey incorporated columns of Numidian marble, a material also employed for flat pilasters and wall revetment throughout. The more than 500 architectural fragments recovered from the surface and excavated from the fills of the robber trenches, allow a two-storey interior elevation and a single-storey exterior elevation with attic zone to be reconstructed (see Fig. 18). The ceramics from the construction trenches date to the early 2nd century AD and the style of the architectural decoration strongly indicates a mid second-century, Antonine date for the whole complex. In lavishness, if not scale, this structure seems to have been intended to rival the roughly contemporary new basilica on the Byrsa at nearby Carthage.²

This reconstruction of the building is based on new work, begun in 2010, by a team from the Tunisian Institut National du Patrimoine and the University of Oxford. For centuries prior to the start of this project, however, this enigmatic building attracted more attention than any other structure at Utica. Antiquarian sources show that not only was this complex reasonably well-preserved prior to the early 20th century but that it also produced a varied range of sculptural finds. To date, however, these finds have never been considered together. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the sculptural finds made in central Utica from the early nineteenth century onwards that can with some certainty be associated with this building. Among these are a series of new discoveries which provide key insights into the design of this Antonine basilica and the aspirations of its commissioners and their community.

¹ A full discussion of the excavations and the architecture of the building is forthcoming in the publication of the Institut National du Patrimoine and University of Oxford project at Utica, directed by Imed Ben Jerbania, Josephine Crawley-Quinn, Elizabeth Fentress, Faouzi Ghozzi, and Andrew Wilson. For a discussion of the structure in its wider urban context, see Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019. I am grateful to Ruurd Halbertsma, John Lund, Dirk Booms, Elizabeth Fentress, Imed Ben Jerbania, Kaouther Jendoubi, Glenys Davies, and Bert Smith for their helpful suggestions and discussions of the primary material, and to Toby Savage for photography.

² On this point, Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019; on the Byrsa basilica, Gros 1985.

The *dar es sultan*

The Italian count Camillo Borgia, the first foreigner whose explorations at Utica (in 1816-1817) are documented, was also the first person to record the remains of this complex.³ He described it as measuring 194 by 129½ feet and enclosed by a colonnade of eastern granite; it was, he was convinced even at this early stage, the city's basilica. In the press releases that accompanied his explorations the building was inexplicably described as a temple but its granite columns, noted as 80 in number, were again remarked upon; such was the interest in Borgia's work that this press release was picked up by a number of foreign periodicals (among them *The Analectic Magazine* in the USA and the *The Scots Magazine* in Scotland).⁴

In 1858, Nathan Davis, more famous for his work at Carthage, spent a season at Utica and, while he did not attempt to identify this building, he excavated in or close to it and was struck by »the marble and granite shafts, capitals, and cornices, of every order, size, and dimension, which lie about here in all directions.«⁵ This area, he concluded, must have been home to the »proconsular palace, in which the republican spirit of Rome was extinguished in the death of its great representative, Cato.«⁶

A more detailed, though similarly poetic, description is provided by Adolphe Daux in 1869:

»Vers le centre de l'île s'élevait un monument grandiose de 54 mètres sur 52 de superficie. Au centre était une vaste salle aux parois revêtues de marbre, et dallée de meme. Une belle galerie à colonnes l'entourait, large de 8.40 m. Sous cette galerie, qui faisait le tour de l'edifice, c'est-à-dire sous ses quatre faces répondant exactement aux quatre points cardinaux, étaient quatre séries de citernes. Les colonnes, en granit gris clair, à grain serré et bien poli, avaient 80 centimetres de diameter; quelques fragments épars sur le sol conservent des vestiges d'ordre dorique: ces monolithes auraient eu alors 6.40 m de hauteur de fût. Un soubassement à marches précédait le péristyle. Il y avait quatre portes; à chacune d'elles deux colonnes étaient légèrement engagées dans les murs.«⁷

There is much that is erroneous here: the dimensions are exaggerated and the order is certainly not Doric. He goes on to speculate about whether this is the Temple of Jupiter mentioned in Plutarch's *Life of Cato* or even a grand proconsular reception hall.⁸ What Daux's description clearly demonstrates, however, is that this was a lavishly decorated building, the walls of which were still partially standing in his day. Indeed, so impressive were the remains that locals, Daux tells us, referred to the building as the *dar es sultan* – the Palace of the Sultan.⁹ This description was largely copied by Charles Tissot, though he notes that it was probably a temple or a basilica.¹⁰

By the 1950s, when Alexandre Lézine started work at the site, stone robbing had stripped off the superstructure of this building entirely. Its plan was now marked only by parallel rows of robber trenches and the denuded preparation surfaces of its floors. Using these elements, Lézine reconstructed the central room of the building at 16.7 m wide and 33.4 m long and proposed that this was indeed a public building, though he refrained from identifying

³ Other foreigners had visited the site before this date, though none seem to have excavated; these include Carl Christian Holck, who brought fragments of sculpture from the site, including a head of Alexander the Great, back to Denmark in around 1810 and on whom, see Lund 2015. On Borgia, see Halbertsma 2019.

⁴ *The Analectic Magazine* 10, 437; *The Scots Magazine* 79, 534.

⁵ Davis 1861, 510.

⁶ Davis 1861, 511.

⁷ Daux 1869, 260–262.

⁸ Daux 1869, 262.

⁹ Daux 1869, 262; the term also appears in Guérin 1862, 8.

¹⁰ Tissot 1888, 75 f.

his ›Monument G‹ more precisely and indeed even questioned whether the central room would have been covered or open-air.¹¹

Although all of these investigators noted this building and correctly observed much about its dimensions and architectural decoration, none attempted a detailed study of it; this is true even of Lézine whose work at the site otherwise was exceptionally precise. As a result, the different assemblages of material associated with the building, recovered by these individuals, have never been pulled together and considered as a whole. This is true of the architectural elements, which will be published elsewhere, but also of the sculpture. In fact, for as long as this building has been known, sculpture has been associated with it. Borgia recovered a female statue from this building and Davis, excavating in the same area, uncovered three marble heads. Borgia's statue is now lost, while the heads found by Davis, now in the British Museum, have for over a hundred years been thought to come from Carthage. Lézine found a series of objects in the 1950s that can be connected to this sculptural assemblage, even if this was not appreciated at the time, while important new finds were made in the 1980s and in 2012 and 2013. The results of the new excavations present an opportunity to put these finds back in context, in an Antonine civil basilica, and consider them alongside previously unpublished material.

Borgia's Flora

Camillo Borgia opened at least three trenches at Utica. The locations of these trenches, and the general layout of the ruins of the sites at this date, are marked on two versions of a map, now held in the archives of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, which was copied by Jean Emile Humbert. Humbert knew Borgia well and had travelled around Tunisia with him in 1815.¹² On both versions the accompanying legend reveals where Borgia excavated: at the site of a building just south of the ›citadel‹ hill where ›Restes de bâtisse de grande apparence, avec des fragments de colonnes de marbre blanc‹ (labelled Site 7 on the maps) were identified; at a possible temple (Site 9) to the southeast (outside the boundary of the current archaeological site), from which he recovered a series of architectural elements; and much further to the east, close to the tip of the peninsula, where he excavated a large public building (Site 19), the basilica.

On the large version of the Humbert's map this structure at Site 19 is identified simply as a ›Grande basilique découverte par le défunt Comte Camillo Borgia en 1817.‹ The building was actually found in 1816 but its location on Humbert's map confirms this is indeed the site of the Antonine basilica. On the smaller of Humbert's map more detail is provided, including the dimensions and material of the columns, as well as the fact that the building was ›décorés dans le fond de niches dont une a été découvert avec une statue muliebre.‹ This statue is again mentioned in the press release: ›The most important of the public buildings which have been discovered, is a Temple at Utica, containing 80 columns of oriental granite, and a statue of the goddess Flora.‹¹³ This identification of the female statue is again found in a letter from Borgia to Andreas Christian Gierlew, the Danish consul in Tunis, dated to September 1816, mentioning the discovery of ›una statua senza testa, essa rappresenta una Flora, più alta un poco del vero, il trabaglio è mediocre.‹¹⁴ Since this piece was headless, Borgia must have based this identification on attributes held by the figure or its general iconography. Lund has convincingly proposed that he would have based his identification on his familiarity with the Flora Farnese,

¹¹ Lézine 1968, 97–99; 1970, 64.

¹² There are a small (inv. no. BTC 10) and a large (inv. no. HTC 43) version of this map; I am grateful to Ruurd Halbertsma and Laurien Zurhake for sending me photographs of these maps.

¹³ *The Scots Magazine* 79, 534.

¹⁴ Lund 2000, 78; Halbertsma 2003, 75.

which was displayed in Naples and had been restored with a bunch of flowers and ears of corn in one hand.¹⁵ We might expect Borgia's Flora to have held a similar attribute, therefore, or to have had an extended arm at the very least. In a later letter written to a Danish associate, Gierlew says that this statue had an inscribed base, though Borgia himself does not say this and it is possible that this inscription was added later or that the statue became associated with an inscribed base after its discovery; Gierlew does not state explicitly that the inscription identifies it as Flora.¹⁶

For a long time it was assumed that Borgia's Flora is the female statue now on display in the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen (Fig. 3).¹⁷ As Lund has demonstrated, however, this is not actually the case.¹⁸ While Gierlew had hoped to send the Flora to Denmark, it was Christian Tuxen Falbe, a successor of Gierlew, who finally arranged the purchase of the statue in 1820 and its shipment in 1821; it would appear that at this point a different statue was sent. A letter of 1828, written by an agent of the Danish consulate based at La Goulette and addressed to Falbe, in fact notes that the statue now in Copenhagen had been found at Utica earlier, before Borgia began working there, along with a series of six other statues.¹⁹ Humbert, in fact, described the quality of the statue that ended up in Copenhagen in glowing terms, which contrast markedly with Borgia's description of his ›mediocre‹ Flora.²⁰ The whereabouts of Borgia's Flora, therefore, are now unknown.

The Copenhagen statue and those found with it do not come from the area of the basilica. They were found over several years at the beginning of the 19th century and entered the collection of the governor (Khaja) of La Goulette.²¹ When Borgia saw these pieces in this collection there seem to have been six statues, though three others were later added to these.²² A pencil cross on the larger version of the Humbert map in Leiden, between Borgia's Sites 6 and 7, shows that the original six of these statues were found on the south-western edge of the city by locals searching for building materials. On Falbe's plan, seven statues are noted as having come from a point in roughly the same location, perhaps indicating that one of the additional pieces added to the governor's collection after Borgia's visit in fact came from the same place.²³ Falbe's plan also marks a second location on his plan, which he describes as ›l'emplacement d'une statue‹, which might refer to the find spot of Borgia's Flora.²⁴ Whether the Flora was one of the nine statues in the governor's collection or not is unclear, as is the exact find spot of the other pieces. In 1820 Falbe purchased the female statue that is now in Copenhagen from La Goulette.²⁵ In 1823, a bidding war for the remaining statues in the governor's collection erupted between the British and Danish consuls and a Dutch delegation led by Humbert. Humbert had long been active in Tunisia, helping to plan and build the new harbour at La Goulette between 1796 and 1798 and undertaking various other engineering projects for the Bey.²⁶ These connections helped him secure the eight remaining statues at a lower price than that offered by either the British or Danes, and they were sent directly to the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.²⁷ The same Danish agent at La Goulette who broke

¹⁵ Lund 2000, 78, n. 17; on the Flora Farnese, Gasparri 2009–2010, 37–42, n. 8, pl. VII.1–5.

¹⁶ Lund 2000, 80.

¹⁷ Inv. ABb 1; Lund 1995.

¹⁸ Lund 2000, 80 f.; I would like to extend my thanks to John Lund for discussing these issues in depth.

¹⁹ Lund 2000, 80 f.

²⁰ Halbertsma 2003, 81, fn. 22: Inventory Book 1818–24, Museum Archive, 1.1/1.

²¹ Halbertsma 2003, 81.

²² Halbertsma 2003, 81.

²³ Lund 2000, 203 f., fig. 6.

²⁴ Lund 2000, 204, fig. 6.

²⁵ Lund 1995; Halbertsma 2003, 81–82.

²⁶ Halbertsma 2003, 72 f.

²⁷ Halbertsma 2003, 82; ter Keurs 2011, 178.

the news to Falbe that the Copenhagen piece was not Borgia's Flora, notes that the other six statues found with it were bought by Humbert. This gives a find spot for six of the eight Leiden pieces but not the other two. Among this group are a cuirassed statue of the emperor Trajan, a draped statue of Tiberius, a statue of Jupiter, and a series of female statues.²⁸ While it might be tempting to think that one of these female statues could be Borgia's Flora, none of them have discernible attributes that could have led to this identification. Lund, meanwhile, has proposed that rather than Flora, the Copenhagen statue instead might represent Plotina, who would thus have been displayed alongside her husband.²⁹

Nathan Davis and three sculpted heads

The discovery of at least eight statues at the beginning of the nineteenth century and Borgia's work at the site soon after, are almost certainly what attracted Nathan Davis to Utica in 1858.³⁰ For this exploratory campaign he secured financial assistance and was provided with a ship, H.M.S. Harpy, and its crew. The captain of the Harpy was Lieutenant Edwin Porcher, who acted as Davis' surveyor on site, and who would go on to excavate at Cyrene, recovering statues and architectural elements for the British Museum with R.M. Smith of the Royal Engineers. Porcher's map of Utica and several of his drawings of the site were published in Davis' *Carthage and Her Remains* in 1861.

Davis opened two trenches at Utica, which he labelled Sites A and B. In a letter of 21 December 1858, headed »Statement explanatory of the contents of fifty-one cases of antiquities embarked upon H.M.S. Supply« (referred to hereafter as the *Statement*), Davis remarks that the locations of Sites A and B are marked on the map produced by Porcher in June 1858.³¹ Sites A and B, however, are not marked on the original version of this map (now in the National Archives at Kew), nor are they indicated on the published version (Fig. 4).³² Despite this, Davis' descriptions of the trenches allow us to pinpoint their locations. Site A was located »at the foot of the hill on which the citadel, the Byrsa of Utica, stood. The place faced the plain, and was at a short distance from our tents. From the hill itself, the view is very extensive, and embraces not only the heights of Carthage, with the few modern buildings upon it, but also the range of hills across the bay.«³³ Site A, therefore, was on the southeast flank of the »citadel« hill, probably close to the line of the modern road (C69) between Zana and Utique Nouvelle, just west of where the current entrance to the archaeological site is located.³⁴ Davis was probably following Borgia's lead here, since Site A would have been close to Borgia's Site 7. Davis' Site B was also opened in an area that Borgia had first explored; indeed, in *Carthage and Her Remains*, Davis notes Borgia's impact on this part of the city, somewhat scathingly.³⁵ He also says that Site B was located on »the cape«, in an area that »had been ransacked for building materials« and was covered with fragmentary architectural elements.³⁶ In Hérissou's

²⁸ Brants 1927, no. 23, 24, 26–28, 29.

²⁹ Lund 1995.

³⁰ Davis 1861; and for more on his explorations elsewhere in North Africa, Davis 1862. Freed 2011 provides a detailed overview of Davis' work in the region, especially at Carthage and Utica.

³¹ This letter is now in the National Archives at Kew (FO 102/62, 245–255). A copy is preserved in a bound volume entitled *Papers relating to Mr Davis' excavations at Carthage* held by the Department of Greece and Rome in the British Museum; Freed (2011, 243) refers to this version of the letter as »BM enclosure XII with BM letter XI«.

³² The map is inv. no. FO 102/62 MFQ 616 pt. 2 (5). See also Davis 1861, 499; on this point, Freed 2011, 173.

³³ Davis 1861, 516.

³⁴ Freed 2011, 174, proposes that Site A was located between the »citadel« hill and the theatre but within the Roman street grid as identified by Lézine; since Davis describes the site as at the foot of the hill, however, it seems likely that it was closer to the »citadel«.

³⁵ Davis 1861, 510.

³⁶ Davis 1861, 510.

later account of Utica and the excavations at it, he notes that Davis worked on the so-called ›island‹, beneath the temple of which remains are still visible.³⁷ The ›island‹ is the conventional term in the antiquarian literature for the tip of the promontory on which Utica is located. The temple must be the structure referred to later by Lézine as ›Temple A‹, which rises immediately west of the basilica. This suggests that Davis opened his Site B in the area previously occupied by Borgia's Site 19, the area of the ›grande basilique‹.

Despite opening trenches in locations known to have produced statuary in the past, Davis found no complete statues during his short stay at Utica to rival the material that had by this stage already made its way to Leiden. In his book, however, Davis remarks on ›the numerous fragments of statuary which we turned up in the course of a few days' digging‹ at his Site B.³⁸ He also specifically mentions ›two marble heads‹ recovered by the marines, the best of which was stolen (›evidently [by] an agent of some European, who considered it legitimate to purloin antiquities‹) and only later returned.³⁹ Hérissou claims that Davis found ›plusieurs têtes de marbre blanc‹, as well as ›plusiers belles mosaïques et nombre d'objets intéressants‹ in this area.⁴⁰ No precise description of his finds is provided by Davis in his book. However, according to the inventory of material shipped on H.M.S. Harpy, provided by Davis in his *Statement*, ›three heads from the Utican excavation B‹ were shipped to London in Case 45 on the 1 December 1858. These Utican materials were transported with many of Davis' finds from Carthage and when they were accessioned at the British Museum in 1859 were mis-recorded as coming from Carthage; unfortunately the cases in which the individual objects arrived was also not recorded, making it difficult to connect Davis' inventory in his *Statement* and the objects in the British Museum. The three heads in question, however, must be the sculptures listed in the register of the Department of Prehistory and Europe at the British Museum as items with inventory numbers 65-67, since all the other heads that were accessioned are carved in relief or are of small dimensions (Fig. 5). Davis' *Statement* makes it clear that three other cases of material from his Utican Site B were shipped to the British Museum. One contained a mosaic depicting two fishermen in a boat, which Davis describes in *Carthage and her Remains* as coming from Site B. The others must have contained two fragments of marble cornice block (inv. 49 and 50) now on display in the basement of the British Museum. A series of identical white marble cornice blocks were found in this same area of Utica by Lézine during his excavations in the 1960s and, more recently, fragments of matching blocks were discovered by the Tunisian-British project in 2012 and 2013. The decoration and dimensions of these cornice blocks from three sets of excavations spread over more than 150 years are so close as to suggest they all belong to the basilica.

The first of the British Museum heads (inv. 65) has been published in full elsewhere (Fig. 6).⁴¹ This striking image was described by Smith, in his catalogue of the British Museum's Greek and Roman sculpture, as a ›Head of a Nubian girl, with the hair disposed in rows of corkscrew ringlets, formally arranged.‹⁴² He was not impressed by its quality, describing it as ›slight work, and roughly finished.‹ The head measures 22 cm from the top of the head to the chin, and so is roughly lifesize. It is dated in the British Museum catalogue to the Hadrianic or Antonine period. The subject is a young woman, though a boy cannot be ruled out. Although her facial features suggest an ethnic characterization, she does not have the

³⁷ Hérissou 1881, 278.

³⁸ Davis 1861, 512.

³⁹ Davis 1861, 512.

⁴⁰ Hérissou 1881, 278.

⁴¹ Russell 2015; Registration number 1859,0402.65:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=407621&partId=1&people=88686&peoA=88686-3-12&page=2

⁴² Smith 1904, 117, no. 1773.

stylised features of a black African. Her hair indicates that she is instead a North African and the closest parallels are personifications of Libya, Numidia or Mauretania.⁴³ Cuttings in the back of the head indicate that it was mounted in some way, possibly slotted on to a pillar to form a herm. Parallels for herms carrying representations of African peoples are known from the baths at Carthage and Oudna.⁴⁴

The second head (inv. 66) is described in the British Museum register as »a youthful head with long flowing hair.« This piece has not been seen by the author; it was not located with the other two in the museum's stores. The sketch in the register and the fact that the individual is shown with free-flowing hair could suggest that this is an image of a captive barbarian, a representation of a specific ethnic group, or a personification. The arrangement of the hair shows similarities with the figure traditionally identified as Mauretania on the relief panels of the Hadrianeum at Rome.⁴⁵ Alternatively, it might be a veiled female head that is connected in the British Museum's online catalogue to Davis' other finds.⁴⁶

The third of Davis' Utican heads (inv. no. 67) is much more easily identified as a personification (Fig. 7). This roughly lifesize head is described by Smith in his catalogue as:

»Head of a personified City in high relief, turned three-quarters to the right. She wears a wreath of ears of corn, with a rosette in the centre, and a mural crown. The nose is lost. The surface is only roughly finished. This head appears to be that of the Tyche of some city rich in corn, such as Alexandria.«⁴⁷

The rough finish that Smith refers to is especially clear around the back of the head behind the ears, where the stone was left point-chiselled. Most of the rest of the features were somewhat schematically modelled with flat chisel and the skin rasped, though not worked with abrasives. Light chisel lines are used to mark out the hairs of the eyebrows. The contours of the eyes and mouth are fairly crudely handled, with toolmarks left visible around each. The drill was used extensively only in the hair and the figure's crown. On stylistic grounds it has been dated to the Hadrianic or Antonine period in the British Museum catalogue.⁴⁸ In proposing Alexandria as a possible identification, Smith was influenced by representations of the city on the coinage of M. Aurelius Lepidus from 61 BC, where she is shown wearing a mural crown wreathed with ears of corn.⁴⁹ Other representations of Alexandria show her wearing the elephant scalp usually associated with Africa or even a crown formed of the prow of a ship; sometimes she is shown with attributes connecting her to the Isiac cult.⁵⁰ Considering where this head was found, however, it is also possible that we are looking here at the Tyche/Fortuna of Utica itself. Utica was certainly a »city rich in corn«, as Smith puts it. As the port closest to the mouth of the Medjerda (ancient Bagradas) it acted as an exporter of grain from the agriculturally wealthy territories of the interior. The precise location of the city's port has not been archaeologically verified but Utica was certainly a strategic harbour in the Late Republican period. It was also known as a grain exporter in this period and corn features on the only personification known to date that might represent the city, found on denarii of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio

⁴³ Russell 2018.

⁴⁴ On the Carthage herms, Picard 1946, fig. 74. 75; Lézine 1969, 35, fig. 22. 23; Manderscheid 1981, 116 no. 423 pl. 45, 117 no. 424 pl. 45, no. 425–426 pl. 46; Gregarek 1999, no. G17, G19, G20–21. On the Oudna herm, Quoniam 1948, 48–50, fig. 10a. 10b; Manderscheid 1981, 114 no. 396 pl. 45.

⁴⁵ Sapelli 1999, 68 f. no. 21.

⁴⁶ Registration number 1859,0402.66, re-registered as 1922,0504.10:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=407148&parentId=1&people=88686&peoA=88686-3-12&page=2

⁴⁷ Smith 1904, 273 f. no. 2221.

⁴⁸ Registration number 1859,0402.67:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=407627&parentId=1&people=88686&peoA=88686-3-12&page=3

⁴⁹ *RRC* 419/2: the figure is identified in the legend.

⁵⁰ LIMC I (1981) s.v. Alexandria (M.-O. Jentel); Mørkholm 1991, 27, 63.

minted in 47-46 BC.⁵¹ On this image a city is represented as a young woman, shown in profile, with a stylized mural crown and long flowing hair tucked up behind her ears. An ear of wheat is depicted next to her, rather than incorporated into her crown. The legend does not identify her as Utica but the coin is thought to have been minted at Utica.

This head was probably made for insertion into a full-length statue. One would expect the figure to have held identifying attributes, such as a handful of flowers and ears of wheat and/or a cornucopia.⁵² The body associated with this head, in other words, might have looked very much like the statue that Borgia identified as Flora. This statue is very unlikely to have held a cornucopia or Borgia would have identified her differently, but she may well have held flowers or ears of wheat. Although Gierlew says that this statue had an accompanying inscription, Borgia nowhere mentions this. Borgia's Flora and the British Museum head certainly come from the same area of Utica; indeed, as noted already, Davis seems to have targeted Borgia's trenches. They are similar in scale – both slightly over-lifesize – and, apparently, quality (>mediocre< and >rough< respectively). In the absence of Borgia's Flora any connection between it and the British Museum head must remain conjectural but the similarities are suggestive. By the time Davis found this head, of course, Borgia's Flora had already disappeared; in fact, Davis would never have seen it – it had been lost since at least 1828 and probably as early as 1820.

Barbarians

The next cache of sculptural finds from the central area of Utica for which we can locate their findspot were found by Taoufik Redissi in the 1980s. They come from a trench along the southern edge of the basilica and can be connected with this structure. They consist of eleven sculptural fragments, the most important of which belong to a series of over-lifesize barbarians carved in high relief. The largest of these fragments comprises the right side of the torso of a male figure (Fig. 8). Its height of 98.4 cm indicates that the original figure was 2.5 m tall. The clothing and pose (*Trauergestus*) is typical of captive representations.⁵³ A socket in the top shows that it had a separately-worked head. The layers of clothing, especially the heavy cloak clasped at the shoulder, find close parallels with the representations of Dacians from the Forum of Trajan.⁵⁴ Several of these Dacians hold one arm diagonally across their chest, with the other held across their stomach, in an identical pose to the Utican figure (Waelkens' Type II).⁵⁵

Two further fragments, which join, comprise the upper right side of a female figure (see Fig. 8). The height, 71.9 cm, shows that it belonged to a figure of the same approximate height as the male example. This female representation has lost its arms but enough survives to show that these were held down at her sides and not across the chest. The figure wears a heavy mantle, again clasped by a broach at the right shoulder; a tunic beneath this mantle blouses over a gathered waistline. Eight further fragments can be connected to this series of barbarians, though none of them connect to the two largest pieces. These include part of an arm, a shoulder, the chest of a figure, and five sections of drapery belonged to the torso or legs of standing figures.

While there are parallels between the male figure and the Trajanic Dacians from Rome, the particular arrangement of the waistband and the three layers of clothing (undergarment,

⁵¹ *RRC* 460/3.

⁵² On representations of Tyche, see the papers and catalogue in Matheson 1994; on the Tyche of Antioch, Dohrn 1960; also LIMC VIII (1997) s.v. Tyche (L. Villard); LIMC VIII (1997) s.v. Tyche/Fortuna (F. Rausa).

⁵³ Waelkens 1985, 644; Schneider 1986, 163.

⁵⁴ Ungaro 1995b, 102; 2002b, 129–133; on the porphyry examples now in Florence, Waelkens 1985, 648 no. 43–44.

⁵⁵ Waelkens 1985, 645.

tunic, mantle) visible on both of the largest fragments might identify these individuals as easterners. The two male figures on the Captives Façade at Corinth have similarly arranged tunics, though their cloaks are clasped at the centre of their chests and not on their shoulders.⁵⁶ This monument, unlike the Forum of Trajan, also incorporated images of female barbarians.⁵⁷ The most relevant parallels for these Utican barbarians, however, are the series of sculpted pillars from Meninx on the island of Jerba.⁵⁸ These pillars are carved with representations of Victories and barbarians.⁵⁹ Fourteen survive in total, six representing barbarians, and fragments from Meninx show that there were originally more. Most of the figures, which are all male, hold one arm across their chest. On the only pillar which still has a head – now in the Louvre – the figure is bearded, long-haired, and wears a Phrygian cap.⁶⁰

The Meninx barbarians provide a close North African parallel for the Utican barbarians. Crucially, they also come from a basilica; Morton reconstructs them in the attic of a portico running along one side of the structure.⁶¹ This complex and its decoration is dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD and so is an immediate precursor to the Utican basilica. Morton argues that the Meninx barbarians are Parthians and the Captives Façade figures have been similarly identified; to judge from other examples collected by Landskron, and acknowledging their fragmentary nature, it would seem reasonable to propose that the Utican individuals were also Parthians.⁶²

New discoveries: two busts

The most recent sculptural discoveries associated with the basilica were made in 2012 and 2013 during the course of the INP-Oxford excavations. They were found in the fill of an early Medieval robber trench running along the south side of the basilica, just to the west of where Redissi recovered his material, probably from the same context. This fill also contained substantial quantities of architectural materials belonging to the basilica, including fragments of cornice matching those excavated by Davis in 1858, which have been mentioned above.⁶³

These new finds constitute two busts, one complete and one fragmentary. The fragment preserves the right side of a neck, shoulder and chest of a female (Fig. 9). She wears a tunic and has long hair, which falls along the right shoulder. The height of 27 cm suggests that the full bust measured c. 60 cm. The rear side has a wedge-shaped projection made to allow its insertion into another element rather than to act as a stand.

The complete bust depicts a bearded male figure and measures 60.5 cm high by 49.2 cm wide (Fig. 10). The figure has heavily drilled curly hair, falling to shoulder-length either side of the head and pushed up above the forehead. A wreath of oak leaves adorns the head, tied by a ribbon at the nape of the neck. The long beard falls on to a bare chest. A heavy mantle runs behind the right shoulder and falls over the left. As on the female fragment, the rear of this bust preserves a wedged-shaped projection (Fig. 11). In this case the boss is preserved enough to show that it sloped outwards from its base upwards and is wedge-shaped also in

⁵⁶ Richardson 1902; Johnson 1932, 101–107 no. 217–218; Stillwell 1942, 74 fig. 50. 51. 75; Schneider 1986, 128–130; for a recent discussion and re-dating of the whole monument to the Neronian period, see Strocka 2010.

⁵⁷ Johnson 1932, 103 f. no. 121–122.

⁵⁸ Baratte 1995; Morton 2003, 61–69; Fentress *et al.* 2009, 143–145.

⁵⁹ Morton 2016, 286.

⁶⁰ Morton 2003, 64 f.; Duval 1942.

⁶¹ Morton 2003, 90–95.

⁶² Morton 2003, 61–69; Strocka 2010, 45–54; on Parthians more generally in Roman sculpture, Landskron 2005b.

⁶³ A full publication of these architectural elements and the reconstructed elevation of the basilica is forthcoming; see also Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019.

profile. It was designed, in other words, to slot into a corresponding wedge-shaped hole, so suspending the bust from vertical surface. At its bottom the bust is just 3 cm deep and its rear wedge is flush with the back of the bust, while at its top the head projects 30 cm from the plane of its rear surface and the top of the wedge projects the other way 7 cm.

The key to how these busts were originally displayed is provided by a series of five fragments of curved mouldings found in the area of the basilica by Lézine in the 1960s and more recently by the INP-Oxford project. The function of these mouldings was only understood in 2017, when they were examined in the grounds of the museum at the site alongside the two busts. These elements, which had been assumed to be architectural, in fact belong to *clipei*, the mouldings (which vary between fragments) framing smooth circular panels (Fig. 12). The five fragments constitute a minimum of four individual *clipei*. Their original diameter, to judge from their curvatures was just over 1 m. Three of these pieces are large enough to show that they had wedge-shaped holes cut through their centres, the dimensions and shape of which correspond exactly to the protrusions on the rear sides of the two busts. Inserted into these cuttings, the busts would have been held in place by gravity alone (Fig. 13-14). Recesses for clamps on the edges of the *clipei* show that they were then fixed to a vertical wall, the busts projecting outwards from them.

The identification of the female figure is impossible. The long hair indicates a divinity or a personification. In the case of the male figure, the arrangement of the hair and beard have similarities with representations of Sarapis and Saturn from North Africa, notably the second-century AD statues of Saturn from Bulla Regia and Sousse, as well as a bust from Carthage.⁶⁴ Saturn does not wear a wreath in these images, however, while Sarapis usually either wears the *kalathos* or has individual locks arranged down his forehead.⁶⁵ The oak wreath in this instance must identify the figure as Jupiter.

The list of sculpture that can be associated, with some certainty, with the Antonine basilica at Utica, therefore, can be summarised as follows:

1. Female statue, ›Flora‹, found 1816 by Borgia;
2. Head of a North African woman, found 1858, by Davis;
3. Head of a Tyche/Fortuna, found 1858, by Davis;
4. Female head with long hair, found 1858, by Davis;
5. Large fragment of a male barbarian, in relief, found in the 1980s, by Redissi;
6. Two large fragments of a female barbarian, in relief, found in the 1980s, by Redissi;
7. Eight smaller fragments of barbarians, in relief, found in the 1980s, by Redissi;
8. Fragment of female bust, found 2012, during INP-Oxford excavations;
9. Bust of Jupiter, found 2013, during INP-Oxford excavations.

Assorted other finds from the ›island‹

An assortment of further statuary was recovered from Utica in the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century but the findspots of this material are unknown. The French traveller Tardieu describes seeing various statues and reliefs at Utica in 1881, including a nude Bacchus and fragments of a »statue gigantesque«, as well as »frises de marbre blanc, de la plus grande magnificence.«⁶⁶ Most of the objects came from the so-called ›island‹ area of the city, the northeastern tip of the cape, though he also describes a statue of the infant Hercules from the

⁶⁴ Bulla Regia: LIMC VIII (1997) 1084 no. 72 s.v. Saturnus (F. Baratte). Sousse: De Chaisemartin 1985, 65–75, fig. 1–5. Carthage: Baratte 1997, 1087 no. 132.

⁶⁵ LIMC VII.1 (1994) 666–692 s.v. Sarapis (G. Clerc – J. Leclant).

⁶⁶ Tardieu 1885, 22–24.

largely residential zone between the ›island‹ and the ›citadel‹, the hill to the southwest, which he connects to a possible Temple of Hercules.⁶⁷

A number of other marble statues found at Utica are preserved in the site museum. Some are briefly described by Lézine.⁶⁸ The best statuary from the site is now in the collection of the Bardo in Tunis. Among these finds, three are worthy of note due to their similarity in form, style and date to the busts from the basilica described above. The *clipei* mouldings from the basilica demonstrate that a series of busts were displayed together and it is possible that some of these objects belong to this series.⁶⁹ These other pieces include:

- a) A female bust in white marble, found in 1904, apparently on the southern edge of the ›island‹ (Fig. 15). This piece, now thought to be in the stores of the Bardo, was published by Colozier as a bust of Artemis, though she notes that Gauckler preferred to identify it as the portrait of an Antonine woman.⁷⁰ Stylistically the bust can be dated to the Antonine period but her clothing – a tunic, gathered over the shoulders, leaving her arms bare – and the presence of a baldric, ornamented with buttons, which crosses her chest diagonally from right to left, lend weight to Colozier's identification; this is a divinity or mythic subject rather than an imperial or non-imperial portrait. In the one published photograph of it from the side it is clear that the piece has a flat rear, though Colozier says it is broken along the whole of its rear surface. She does, however, propose that it was probably »un buste-applique« due to its forward-leaning head and the fact that the arms are carved close against the body.⁷¹ The dimensions are consistent with the two new busts: 57 cm high by 47 cm wide.
- b) A male bust in white marble (Fig. 16), found in 1948 by Cintas, on the eastern or northern side of the ›island‹, »près d'un bassin en maçonnerie.«⁷² Picard, who discusses this bust in his report on Cintas' excavations in the *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des Travaux* for 1949, identifies the subject as a young Marcus Aurelius. While the piece is certainly Antonine, it bears little resemblance to Marcus Aurelius' portrait types. His Type II portrait, showing him in his late twenties before he became emperor, would be the closest in overall format to this bust but in these images he is shown with a distinctly tall brow and a much lighter beard.⁷³ The chlamys with shoulder broach need not identify the subject as imperial. If not the emperor, this must represent a young man of the Antonine period, perhaps a member of the local elite. The quality of the carving is not excellent again and indeed Picard remarks on »une certaine sécheresse et un abus du trépan«, which he suggests are the hallmarks of »travail provincial.«⁷⁴ The rear side of this piece has not been inspected and its dimensions are not published.
- c) A female bust in white marble (Fig. 17), found with the bust of the Antonine youth discussed above. The subject has a typical Antonine hairstyle and is middle-aged. Picard identified the woman tentatively as Domitia Lucilla, mother of Marcus Aurelius, but there is no accepted typology for portraits of Domitia and in practice this could

⁶⁷ Tardieu 1885, 21 f.

⁶⁸ Lézine 1970, 42–44.

⁶⁹ None of these pieces have been inspected in person; they are assumed to be in the Bardo still but have not been located. A future study could easily determine whether they belong in this series by inspecting their rear faces.

⁷⁰ Colozier 1952, 75 f., pl. III.3. III.4; P. Gauckler's observation is recorded in a communication in the *BAntFr* for 1904 (331 f.).

⁷¹ Colozier 1952, 75: »la tête penchée à l'avant et les bras qui n'ont pas été sculptés pour s'animer et se dégager du corps.«

⁷² Picard 1949, 620; Cintas 1951, 84, fig. 42.

⁷³ On Marcus Aurelius' portrait types, and those of other Antonine imperial subjects, Wegner 1939; Fittschen and Zanker 1985, 63–90; Fittschen 1999.

⁷⁴ Picard 1949, 621.

represent any elite woman of the Antonine period.⁷⁵ Again, the rear side of this piece has not been inspected and its dimensions are not published.

Of these three busts, the first one fits well with the two new busts into a series of divine images. Its format and dimensions led Colozier to identify it as a mounted bust even before the new pieces, with their characteristic mounting devices, were discovered. The other two busts are more complicated. There are some reasons to think they might also belong to this series. First, they come from the area of the ›island‹, a relatively small section of central Utica. Second, they date to the Antonine period. Third, standalone busts are not common sculptural elements in North Africa. Without their dimensions or details of their rear surfaces little can be said for sure, but we should consider the possibility that the *imagines clipeatae* of the basilica carried both divine images and portraits of Utican elites.

The sculptural programme of the basilica

The discovery of the barbarian fragments, the two new busts and a range of *clipei* mouldings in the same spoliation trench running along the south side of the basilica strongly indicates that these pieces belonged to the exterior rather than interior of this building. At the point at which this trench was dug, in the early Medieval period, the main wall of the basilica was still partially standing and so material from the building's interior would have to have been carried some distance through one of the surviving doors to be deposited here. This spoliation trench follows the line of the foundation of the southern exterior portico of the basilica and the bulk of the architectural elements found in its fill come from either the free-standing order of this portico or the pilaster order of its rear wall. It seems likely that this sculptural assemblage also belongs to this part of the structure.

This colonnade had an order 7.10 m tall, comprising granite column shafts 5.92 m in height. It was certainly large enough to support an attic storey that could have housed the relief barbarians, at 2.5 tall. Morton reconstructs the Meninx barbarians on just such an attic storey, on the portico running along the side of the basilica there.⁷⁶ Whether the *clipei* were displayed between these figures or on the back wall of the portico is not clear but, as will be shown below, an attic programme incorporating both elements finds parallels elsewhere and it is tempting to place them together at Utica too (Fig. 18).

The similarities between the Utica barbarians and the representations of barbarians from the Forum of Trajan, the Captives Façade at Corinth, and the basilica at Meninx are revealing of the wider artistic trends that the designers of the Utican basilica were drawing on. Whatever their exact identification – Parthians seems likely, but without their heads this must remain open – these were images of Roman conquest employing an accepted iconography celebrated not just in monumental building in the capital but at regional centres throughout the empire. We hear in the literary sources of representations of subjugated peoples, *simulacra gentium*, in Pompey's theatre and Augustus' *Porticus ad Nationes* at Rome.⁷⁷ In the West, images of peoples – either subjugated barbarians or provincial personifications – are known from a wide range of structures. The Dacians from the Forum of Trajan have already been mentioned, and the numerous provincial personifications from the Hadrianum show an adaptation of the theme.⁷⁸ This was a decorative scheme adopted throughout the West, with the images sometimes accompanied by, or even replaced by, texts, as on the Alpine victory monument at La Turbie.⁷⁹ In the East, one can point to the *ethne* from the Sebasteion at

⁷⁵ Picard 1949, 622; on Antonine female portraits, Fittschen and Zanker 1983, 13–24.

⁷⁶ Morton 2003, 90–95.

⁷⁷ Suetonius, *Nero* 46; Pliny the Elder, *NH* XXXVI.39, 41; Servius, *Ad Aen.* 8.721.

⁷⁸ Ungaro 1995b; 2002b; Sapelli 1999; an overview of examples is provided in Liverani 1995, 222 f.

⁷⁹ Casimir 1932; Binniger 2006; Ferris 2011, 189.

Aphrodisias, which though not representations of captives, performed a similar function and find parallels with the Hadrianum panels.⁸⁰ At Ephesos, Parthians and perhaps other easterners were depicted on the terrace of the Temple of Domitian, and a series of Dacians, similar in format to those displayed in the Forum of Trajan, ornamented the Eastern Baths.⁸¹ At Ascalon, reliefs of captives were displayed in attic zone of the apse of the basilica.⁸² In North Africa itself, a display of personified cities and regions seems to have occupied the precinct of the Temple of Caelestis at Dougga, though only a handful of inscriptions now remain.⁸³ Small images of barbarians were employed in the interior of the basilica at Lepcis Magna; Ward-Perkins places them in the attic zone of the apses at either end of the structure.⁸⁴ Finally, the barbarians from the basilica at Meninx on Jerba have already been mentioned; these are both stylistically similar to the Utican pieces and also broadly contemporary with them.⁸⁵ They were carved in coloured decorative stones, including purple, red-grey, and yellow limestones from regional sources.

Imagines clipeatae – shield-portraits, tondi or medallions – are similarly widely attested in the Roman world. The distinctive format of these objects seems to originate in the Hellenistic East, especially in the 2nd century BC, when they are primarily found in monumental public architecture.⁸⁶ In the Roman world they appear on public monuments, where they often carry representations of deities, mythic figures, imperial family members or ancestors, but they also found in private contexts, where they are typically used to celebrate illustrious forebears or honour great thinkers of the past.⁸⁷ Winkes argues that the frames marked these items out as objects of reverence and focuses on their militaristic, specifically triumphal, overtones.⁸⁸ La Rocca identifies the divine *imagines clipeatae* as primarily apotropaic images.⁸⁹ They are attested in marble, bronze and other metals, terracotta and wood.⁹⁰ In most of the extant examples, the portrait is represented as a bust, cut off just beneath the chest. The Late Roman series of shield-portraits from Izmir and Aphrodisias are of this format, as are the bulk of the funerary examples that survive, mostly on sarcophagi.⁹¹ On most of these pieces the shield itself is represented by a low circular band of moulding, out of which the portrait projects. Inscriptions are sometimes added to the underside of this moulding (as at Aphrodisias), while lines of bead-and-reel or acanthus scroll are also added to the frame.⁹²

While the majority of surviving *imagines clipeatae* conform to this type, considerable experimentation with this form is visible on public monuments. The Forum of Augustus at Rome is a case in point. Here *imagines clipeatae* decorated the attic storeys of the side porticoes, framed by caryatids supporting projecting sections of crown moulding and soffit.⁹³ The best-preserved fragments of *clipeus* that survive are decorated with heads – rather than

⁸⁰ Smith 1988; 2013.

⁸¹ Schneider 1986; 1990, 251–253 pl. 71.1–2; Aurenhammer 1990, 162–164 no. 144–145; Landskron 2005a.

⁸² Fischer 1995, 121.

⁸³ *CIL* VIII 26651; see Liverani 1995, 243 f.

⁸⁴ Ward-Perkins 1952.

⁸⁵ Baratte 1995; Morton 2003, 61–69; Fentress *et al.* 2009, 143–145.

⁸⁶ On Hellenistic examples, see with bibliography Bol 1988 (Kalydon); Michalowski 1932, 9–10, fig. 4. 5. pl. 4. 5 (Delos); Mango 2003, 109–111 no. S5 (Eretria); Winkes 1969, 159–60 (Eleusis); Neumann 1977 (Rhodes); von den Hoff 2015 (Pergamon); and von Prittwitz und Gaffron 1994 (from the Mahdia shipwreck).

⁸⁷ Vermeule 1965; Winkes 1969; Ensoli 1997.

⁸⁸ Winkes 1969.

⁸⁹ La Rocca 1995, 78; Ensoli 1997; Verzár-Bass 2017.

⁹⁰ Vermeule 1965.

⁹¹ On the Izmir pieces, Vermeule 1965, 373–5; Smith 1991.

⁹² For the decorated frame of the tympanum tondo of Marcus Aurelius from Eleusis, see Vermeulen 1965, 378 fig. 30.

⁹³ Zanker 1968, 8; 1984, fig. 25; Ungaro 2002a, fig. 3.

busts – of Jupiter Ammon.⁹⁴ It has been suggested these Jupiter heads alternated with heads of Medusa, though the evidence for these is limited.⁹⁵ A second type of bearded head, apparently wearing a torque, is represented by several fragments that have been variously interpreted either as a second Jupiter, as a Gaul, or as a Celtic deity, perhaps Cernunnos.⁹⁶ The frames around these heads are decorated in various ways, with combinations of radiating leaves, *baccellatura*, anthemion borders, and double guilloches; they measure c. 2 m in diameter.⁹⁷ The circular *clipei* are set into square frames, further decorated with lines of moulding; head, shield and frame are carved from the same piece of white marble. The decorative scheme from the Forum of Augustus is not an isolated example and indeed in the Augustan phase of the Basilica Aemilia, the façade of the Portico of Gaius and Lucius was also decorated with *clipei*, in this case framed by representations of standing captives.⁹⁸ These *clipei* were probably slightly larger than those used in the Forum of Augustus, c. 2.3-2.4 m in diameter, but their frames at least were similarly decorated; none of the central figures ornamenting them survive.⁹⁹ According to Pliny the earlier phase of this structure, put up by M. Aemilius Lepidus in the 1st century BC also made use of shield portraits, in this case carrying images of his ancestors.¹⁰⁰

These Augustan models – forum and basilica respectively – inspired a range of provincial complexes.¹⁰¹ An almost identical arrangement of caryatids and *imagines clipeatae* to those found on the Forum of Augustus is attested in the Julio-Claudian forum at Mérida in Spain.¹⁰² Jupiter Ammon and Medusa feature on the best-preserved of these *clipei*.¹⁰³ Unlike the heads from the Forum of Augustus, which project outwards from the plane of the shield like protomes, the heads from Mérida are carved into the flat discs at the centre of each shield. These central discs are bordered with lines of either twisted cord, plain listel or egg-and-dart moulding. This narrow moulding is ringed by the same *baccellatura* found on the Augustan examples and then by a final line of edge moulding: twisted cord, plain listel, and, in the case of the Medusa *clipei*, wreaths of either oak or laurel or floral scrolls. These shields are set into square panels, the upper two corners of which are further ornamented with rosettes. Again, these reliefs are carved from a single piece of white marble. Relief caryatids framed these *imagines clipeatae* and the whole ensemble adorned the attics of the porticoes surrounding the forum. A series of *imagines clipeatae* have also been recovered from the Provincial Forum at Tarragona, where Hauschild has argued that they again adorned the attics of the porticoes.¹⁰⁴ This complex is generally accepted as Flavian in date, though a Julio-Claudian date has also been proposed.¹⁰⁵ The overall scheme here is similar to that at Mérida but with the difference that the caryatids are replaced with framing reliefs of candelabra and the *clipei* are represented as *paterae* rather than shields, lending the whole scheme a more obviously sacred aesthetic.¹⁰⁶ The two best-preserved *clipei* again bear images of Jupiter Ammon, with a third tentatively identified as Medusa.¹⁰⁷ These pieces measure 1.5 m in diameter.¹⁰⁸ Italica and Cordoba have

⁹⁴ Zanker 1984; La Rocca 1995; Ungaro 1995a, 46; Verzár-Bass 2017, 152 f. fig. 3.

⁹⁵ La Rocca 1995; Verzár-Bass 2017, 153 f.

⁹⁶ Verzár-Bass 2017, 153–158.

⁹⁷ For the three attested formats, see Ungaro 2004, 23 f. fig. 6.

⁹⁸ Coarelli 1985, 262–264, 296–298; for a reconstruction, see Lipps 2011, 148 fig. 133.

⁹⁹ Lipps 2011, 151–154 fig. 135–142.

¹⁰⁰ Pliny the Elder, *NH* XXXV.13.

¹⁰¹ Verzár-Bass 2017.

¹⁰² Trillmich 1990, 310–315; 2004, 328 fig. 11. 12; Mateos Cruz and Palma García 2004; Ensoli 1997, 164.

¹⁰³ de la Barrera 2000, no. 229–370.

¹⁰⁴ Hauschild 1972, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Fishwick 2004, 22–30.

¹⁰⁶ Mar 1993; Verzár-Bass 2017, 158–160 fig. 7.

¹⁰⁷ On the Medusa, Koppel 1990, 334 f.

¹⁰⁸ Ruiz de Arbulo *et al.* 2004, 142–144, fig. 3335.

also produced fragments of *clipei* from its northern forum, perhaps indicating that another series of these images was displayed here.¹⁰⁹ In Gaul, Caderousse, Vienne, and Arles have all produced *clipei*. Jupiter Ammon appears again on the examples from Caderousse and Vienne, while at Arles, Cousins has convincingly suggested that the figure traditionally identified as Jupiter Ammon is actually a water deity.¹¹⁰ The Caderousse shield is decorated with a schematic egg-and-dart, clearly referencing the Augustan models at Rome. The Vienne piece, on the other hand, is ringed by three lines of moulding – from the outside inwards: a line of beads, a schematic vegetal moulding, and finally a ring of upright, outward-facing acanthus leaves, an overall arrangement not dissimilar to the examples from Utica. The Arles panel is different: the shield element is ringed by lines of egg-and-dart, bead-and-reel, and acanthus leaves, similar to the Vienne piece, but the background of the square panel in which the shield is set is filled with acanthus plants at each corner. This general arrangement of moulding and background decoration is also found on a series of *imagines clipeatae* recovered from the La Grange-des-Dîmes temple at Avenches.¹¹¹ These *clipei* carry images Jupiter Ammon, a possible river god, and perhaps Medusa, though the last is extremely tentative.¹¹² It is not clear where these reliefs were displayed; they could belong to the temple façade or to the porticoes surrounding the temple.¹¹³

The presence of Jupiter Ammon on these various examples of *clipei* shows the direct influence of the Forum of Augustus. Other deities, however, figure on *imagines clipeatae* elsewhere. The Arch of Augustus at Rimini is decorated with four medallions, two on each side, representing Jupiter, Apollo, Neptune, and Roma.¹¹⁴ At Aquileia, a series of eight *clipei* have been recovered, dated to the mid 2nd century AD.¹¹⁵ They depict Jupiter, Vulcan, Mars, Roma, Mercury, a young male deity (identified as either Attis or one of the Dioscuri), and two further female deities. These *clipei* are set into square panels and have a diameter of c. 1 m. The Jupiter from Aquileia, bare-chested, bearded and with the hold of a cloak over one shoulder, shares some features with the figure from Utica.¹¹⁶ A marble *imago clipeata*, now in Copenhagen but originally from Venice, also provides a loose parallel.¹¹⁷ The figure is bare-chested, with a cloak hanging looped over his left shoulder. He has a full beard and curly hair, with a similar anastole above the forehead. The wreath is much larger and fuller in form and culminates in a large round gem. The loose ends of the ribbons holding the wreath in place fall down from the back of the neck onto either side of the chest.

In most cases, the bust and the shield components of *imagines clipeatae* are carved out of the same piece of stone. However, examples on which these elements are separately worked are attested. Smith highlights a fragment of a shield frame, inscribed with the name of Istoteles, from Aphrodisias.¹¹⁸ This piece belongs to a series of *imagines clipeatae* depicting philosophers and statesmen, datable to the late 4th or 5th century AD. Most of the rest of the examples in this series were carved as one piece, with shield and bust together, but the Istoteles

¹⁰⁹ Peña Jurado 2007, 325–327; Ensoli 1997, 165.

¹¹⁰ Espérandieu I.272 (Caderousse) and X.7627 (Vienne). For the *clipeus* with a male figure from the so-called Temple of Augustus at Arles, see Espérandieu IX.6731; Verzár 1977, pl. 24.1; Ensoli 1997, 165, fig. 4; and on its reinterpretation, Cousins 2016, 108.

¹¹¹ Bossert 1998; Cousins 2016, 108–110; Koppel (1990, 334 f.) has argued that Medusa was also represented in this series.

¹¹² Bossert 1998; Cousins 2016, 108–110.

¹¹³ Cousins 2016, 108–110.

¹¹⁴ Mansuelli 1944; Riccioni 1978; for the Jupiter, see LIMC VIII (1997) 443 no. 260 s.v. Iuppiter (F. Canciani).

¹¹⁵ Santa Maria Scrinari 1972, 195–6 no. 606–13.

¹¹⁶ Santa Maria Scrinari 1972, 195 no. 606; LIMC VIII (1997) 443 no. 261 s.v. Iuppiter (F. Canciani); Winkes 1969, 52 f., 133.

¹¹⁷ Winkes 1969, 173; LIMC VIII (1997) 435 no. 151 s.v. Iuppiter (F. Canciani); Poulsen 1951, 363, no. 520a (inv. 2117).

¹¹⁸ Smith 1991, 150 fig. 6.

fragment has a recessed interior into which a circular panel, presumably carrying the bust, could have been set. Two busts without frames were also found with this group and could have been made for insertion into a frame like that made for the bust of Istoteles.¹¹⁹

The commissioners of the Utica basilica, therefore, were following a well-travelled path: barbarian representations and *imagines clipeatae* are common fixtures in the architectural sculpture of Roman public building, both east and west. This being said, on only a small number of structures are these features combined; in (approximate) chronological order, the Basilica Aemilia, the Forum of Augustus, the Julio-Claudian forum at Mérida, and the Forum of Trajan at Rome. In the last of these, *imagines clipeatae* were set between the Dacians on the attic storey of the porticoes running either side of the main piazza.¹²⁰ Of these four precursors to the Utican basilica, in only the Forum of Trajan do the *imagines clipeatae* seem to carry portraits rather than, or perhaps in addition to, divine images. Although fragmentary, the subjects that have been proposed include Agrippina Minor, either Nerva or Trajan's father, Livia, and Vespasian.¹²¹ The prototype here was very likely the Republican phase of the Basilica Aemilia, which Pliny tells us was adorned with images of Marcus Aemilius Lepidus' ancestors, though we do not know if representations of captives were integrated into the scheme at this date or whether these portraits survived on the later versions of the structure. If the two portraits busts recovered in 1948 at Utica, therefore, belong to the same series as the divine bust found in 1904 and the two further examples excavated in 2012 and 2013, the sculptural programme of the basilica would represent the only one outside Rome, and perhaps even beyond the Forum of Trajan, incorporating barbarian figures and *imagines clipeatae* comprising both divine images and portraits.

Conclusions

The inspiration behind the sculptural programme of the Utican basilica is particularly telling when one considers its broader urban context. The basilica belongs to the second phase of a major overhaul of central Utica, the first phase of which was begun in the Hadrianic period, when structures around the old forum were levelled and a new forum-sanctuary built, just to the south.¹²² This complex consisted of an open piazza enclosed on three sides by porticoes and with a major temple midway along its northern side. The basilica was later added just to the north of this complex, on top of the area previously occupied by the old forum. The Hadrianic forum-sanctuary and the Antonine basilica re-emphasised Utica's regional importance and new colonial status, but the former may well also have had a more specific function.¹²³ The later *Chronica Gallica de 452* records an earthquake at Utica in AD 410, during which the ground beneath the ›foro Traiano‹ groaned for seven days.¹²⁴ This Forum of Trajan was clearly a prominent public space at the heart of the city and its name might even suggest that this was another Hadrianic Traianeum, like those already known from Pergamon and Italica.¹²⁵ The new Hadrianic forum-sanctuary is a plausible candidate for this complex. While the basilica was a later addition, it is tempting to think that the Forum of Trajan in Rome, a structure comprising forum, basilica and (possibly) temple, served as direct inspiration.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Smith 1991, 156 f. fig. 11–12.

¹²⁰ Packer 1997, 426 f.; Ungaro 2002b.

¹²¹ Ungaro 1995, 131; Ensoli 1997, 167.

¹²² Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019.

¹²³ On the granting of colonial status to the city, Gell., *NA* 16.13; the city's formal title was *colonia Iulia Aelia Hadriana Augusta Utika*.

¹²⁴ Mommsen 1894, 652; Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019.

¹²⁵ For this argument, Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019.

¹²⁶ On the debate about a temple associated with the Forum of Trajan, see Claridge 2007.

What of the other sculpture associated with the basilica? Borgia's Flora and the heads found by Davis find their most obvious home in the interior of the building. As head of a *conventus* Utica would have been a seat of provincial assizes held by the governor; a statue base or altar found near the basilica also records a dedication by the proconsul *provinciae Africae*.¹²⁷ The basilica would have been the venue for these assizes. A personification of the host city, newly endowed with a grand urban centre, would have been a suitable addition to the space, whether the British Museum head fitted Borgia's Flora or not. The herm of the African woman finds her closest parallels in the contemporary herms from another public building, the Antonine Baths at Carthage. Here it has been suggested that the two black limestone herms commemorated Antoninus Pius' recent subjugation of insurrection in North Africa.¹²⁸

A more obvious reference to Antoninus Pius' Mauretanian wars, carried out between AD 145 and 149, is the mosaic from Tipasa decorated with a central panel showing a family of African *gentes devictae*.¹²⁹ In this case, as at Utica, these images adorned the city's basilica. Strikingly, the Tipasa mosaic also seems to include in its decorative border portraits of individuals who are not clearly identifiable as captives. One of these images shows a veiled woman, another a man with a fashionable short beard.¹³⁰ Ferris has interpreted these individuals and others in the border as members of the local elite and very likely the dedicatees of the mosaic.¹³¹ These images were assertions of renewed imperial control over the region, therefore, but also statements of loyalty.

While the exterior of the basilica at Utica, therefore, was adorned with images of captive foreign barbarians, probably Parthians, a display of African *gentes devictae* on its interior would have lent the entire sculptural programme a more specific, and regional, relevance; this was Utica asserting itself as a bastion of imperial power and a key administrative hub in a recently placated North Africa. The case of the Tipasa mosaic might also provide an explanation for the two portrait busts found in 1948. If they were displayed on *imagines clipeatae*, they could depict either the commissioners of the structure or other Utican notables, the very individuals who were driving this potent display of Utican renewal.

In sum, the Antonine basilica at Utica was one of the most important and prominent structures in the city's new urban heart. It was lavishly adorned with imported and regional decorative stones, and even imported roof tiles. Like the forum-sanctuary across the road to the south, the building was a statement of Utica's resurgence in the 2nd c. AD. The sculptural programme reflects this and draws direct connections with the largest of all comparable complexes, the Forum of Trajan at Rome. By integrating divine imagery, representations of subjugated peoples, foreign and African, a new representation of the city itself, and even portraits of prominent local elites, the ensemble celebrated Utica's role at the heart of both Roman Africa and the wider imperial system more generally.

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¹²⁷ Lepelley 2001, 55–81; Ben Jerbania *et al.* 2019.

¹²⁸ Picard 1946, 258.

¹²⁹ Carcopino 1914; Dunbabin 1978, 24, pl. 7; Russell 2018, 274 f., fig. 22.13.

¹³⁰ Carcopino 1914, no. 8–9; Russell 2018, 274, *contra* Carcopino, who refused to identify these individuals as ›Romans‹.

¹³¹ Ferris 2000, 104 f.

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